

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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FM USMISSION USBERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6644
AMEMBASSY BONN
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L USBERLIN 0886

E O 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV UR GW WB GE
SUBJ: ABRASIMOV AND FALIN: DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO SOVIET POLICY
ON BERLIN

REF: (A) BONN 5888, (B) BONN 5887

BEGIN SUMMARY: WHILE WE AGREE THAT AMBASSADOR FALIN HAS BEEN
PERMITTED IN RECENT MONTHS TO PLAN AN INCREASING ROLE IN BERLIN
POLICY, WE DOUBT THAT A FUNDAMENTAL DIVISION IN SOVIET POLICY
IS INVOLVED IN THE DIFFERENCE IN TONE THAT HE AND ABRASIMOV
SEEM TO TAKE ON BERLIN MATTERS. END SUMMARY

1. WE TOO HAVE NOTED THE INDICATIONS DESCRIBED REF A THAT
FALIN IS PLAYING A ROLE IN BERLIN POLICY NOTWITHSTANDING THE
ENDLESS SOVIET INSISTENCE THAT BERLIN IS NOT GOVERNED BY THE FRG
WITH THE CORRESPONDING IMPLICATION THAT THEIR AMBASSADOR TO THE FRG
SHOULD NOT REALLY BE DEALING WITH BERLIN MATTERS. THE EVIDENCE CON-
TAINED PARA 4 OF REF A SPEAKS FOR ITSELF. WE ARE ESPECIALLY STRUCK
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BY THE FACT THAT FALIN HAS APPARENTLY BEEN AUTHORIZED TO
HELP ARRANGE A POSSIBLE STOBBE VISIT TO MOSCOW.

2. PIECING TOGETHER THE IMMEDIATE PAST, WE RECALL THAT
ON DECEMBER 8 ABRASIMOV MADE HIS CRYPTIC REMARKS TO
FRENCH AMBASSADOR BRUNET TO THE EFFECT THAT THE SOVIETS
MIGHT LOOK FOR ANOTHER INTERLOCUTOR ON BERLIN QUESTIONS.

(USBER 0436 AND PREVIOUS) AFTER THAT REMARK SURFACED IN THE PRESS, AND IT WAS OFFICIALLY DENIED BY THE SOVIETS, A SOVIET JOURNALIST EXPLAINED THAT ABRASIMOV HAD IN MIND AS A NEW INTERLOCUTOR NOT THE GDR OR THE WEST BERLIN SENAT, BUT THE FRG. IT COULD BE, THEREFORE, THAT SOME-TIME LAST FALL, MOSCOW DECIDED THAT THERE WAS USEFULNESS IN DEALING MORE DIRECTLY WITH THE FRG ON BERLIN MATTERS. EMBASSY BONN HAS ALSO REPORTED THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MEMORY, SOVIET FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN BERLIN AFFAIRS HAVE BEEN PREPARED TO DISCUSS BERLIN WITH MEMBERS OF THE FRG EMBASSY. (BONN 2510; 2953)

3. SEEN FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT HERE, HOWEVER, WE ARE SKEPTICAL THAT THERE IS ANY FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE OF APPROACH BETWEEN FALIN AND ABRASIMOV ON BERLIN MATTERS. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE FROM OUR MANY CONTACTS WITH SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIALS HERE THAT THIS IS THE CASE. OUR CONTACTS HAVE TOLD US FROM TIME TO TIME THAT GROYMKO TAKES AN ACTIVE INTEREST IN BERLIN QUESTIONS. THE THIRD EUROPEAN DIVISION, RESPONSIBLE FOR BERLIN, SEEMS ABLY STAFFED AND KVITSINSKIY ESPECIALLY ENJOYS A REPUTATION AS A HARD-DRIVING MINISTRY OFFICIAL FULLY ON TOP OF HIS WORK. WE ALSO NOTE THAT THERE IS A KIND OF CONSULTATIVE MECHANISM WITHIN THE EASTERN BLOC TO COORDINATE BERLIN POLICY. GIVEN THE HIGH LEVEL OF EASTERN BLOC INTEREST IN BERLIN MATTERS, AND THE RATHER CLEAR SOVIET VIEWS ON CONFIDENTIAL

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THEM, WE FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT ONE OR ANOTHER SOVIET AMBASSADOR IS REALLY DEVIATING FROM POLICY. RATHER, WE SUSPECT THAT FALIN HAS A CONSIDERABLY WIDER LEASH THAN ABRASIMOV BASED ON THE NEED HE HAS TO APPEAR CONVINCING TO FRG OFFICIALS. THE IMPERATIVES OF ABRASIMOV'S POSITION ARE DIFFERENT. HE TENDS TO ADOPT A "PURIST" LINE FROM THE SOVIET STANDPOINT, ALTHOUGH HE WILL OCCASIONALLY DO AND SAY THINGS THAT MAY GRATE ON GDR OFFICIALDOM. FOR EXAMPLE, KUNZE OF THE SENAT DEFLECTED A RECENT MITDANK PROTEST ABOUT STOBBE'S ESPOUSAL OF THE CAUSE OF NICO HUEBER WITH A REFERENCE TO THE WARM WORDS ABOUT STOBBE THAT ABRASIMOV HAD SAID AT A WEST BERLIN PRESS CONFERENCE ON APRIL 4. IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, ABRASIMOV IN OUR VIEW DOES NOT HAVE THE SAME NEED AS FALIN TO COME ACROSS AS AN OPEN-MINDED CONVERSATION PARTNER IN HIS REASONABLY INFREQUENT CONTACTS WITH WESTERNERS.

4. IN SHORT, WE TEND TO THE VIEW THAT SOVIET-BERLIN POLICY IS CAREFULLY THOUGHT OUT AND CONTAINS DIFFERENT STRANDS WHICH EXPLAINS THE OCCASIONAL VARIANCE IN TONE BETWEEN FALIN AND ABRASIMOV. ALTHOUGH THE TWO MEN MAY WELL BE RIVALS FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE HIGHEST LEVELS

OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT, WE DOUBT THAT THE LATTER WOULD ALLOW SUCH A RIVALRY TO INFLUENCE THE EXECUTION OF SOVIET POLICY IN AN IMPORTANT AREA AND, AS NOTED ABOVE, MOSCOW DOES NOT SEEM TO LACK IN EXPERTISE ON BERLIN.

5. IN A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH A SOVIET DIPLOMAT REPORTED BY MEMCON, WE HEARD THAT LAPIN, DESCRIBED AS "THOROUGHLY DISLIKED" AT TASS, IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY TO BE THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO THE FRG. OUR SOVIET INTER-LOCUTOR THOUGHT BONDARENKO IS THE LOGICAL CHOICE. LOTHAR LOEWE OF ARD HAS TOLD MANY PEOPLE ABOUT A RUMOR HE PICKED UP THAT KVITSINKSIY MAY BE NAMED. IT SEEMS TO US THAT HE MAY BE TOO JUNIOR FOR SUCH A KEY AMBASSADORSHIP, BUT PERHAPS EMBASSY MOSCOW COULD COMMENT ON THAT POINT. GEORGE
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